

Senate stalls Statue of Liberty coin program

By Roger Boye 550

The United States Senate has yet to approve a Statue of Liberty coinage program, much to the regret of some hobbyists.

Earlier this year, an Illinois congressman introduced legislation authorizing production of three types of commemorative coins, in part to raise money for statue repairs. The proposal had about 300 cosponsors when the United States House passed it on March 5.

But since then the bill's progress has slowed in the Senate, due to the efforts of Sen. James McClure [R., Idaho] and other factors. As of last Monday, the Senate had not scheduled a date to consider the coinage program; the Senate Banking Committee approved the bill about 10 days ago.

McClure may try to amend the bill to require production of one-ounce "bullion coins" using silver from government stockpiles, said a spokesman for the Senate Banking Committee. Still other senators want Uncle Sam to mint millions of gold pieces to compete with the South African krugerrand, a coin many people see as a symbol of South Africa's apartheid racial policies.

Such proposals could further delay the Statue of Liberty bill in Congress, reducing the program's chances for success. If and when the legislation passes, technicians at the United States Mint will need many weeks to complete coin designs and produce the dies.

The statue legislation requires that the three commemoratives be issued between Oct. 1, 1985, and Dec. 31, 1986, in time for the statue's 1986 centennial. Coin sales are designed to raise as much as \$137.5 million for the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, a goal that already seems unrealistic given the congressional delay.

● As part of an ongoing program, Uncle Sam is charging \$2.25 each for bronze medals depicting former president Harry S. Truman and commemorating the 100th anniversary of his birth.

The 1½-inch specimens duplicate a congressional gold medal that President Reagan presented in late March to Margaret Truman Daniel, the late president's daughter. Congress authorized production of the medals in a law passed on May 8, 1984, Truman's 100th birthday.

To order, send a check to the United States Mint [Medals], P.O. Box 500, Philadelphia, Pa. 19105.